PLANTING SEEDS AND GROWING LEADERS

Promise Neighborhoods’ Promise Land Community Garden at The Seed Farm

Established in 2007, and modeled after the Harlem Children’s Zone, Promise Neighborhoods of the Lehigh Valley is a Black-led, anti-racist, liberation-based grassroots organization. Promise Neighborhoods focuses on healing and community capacity-building through leadership development, violence prevention, community engagement, and health equity.

This year, a new initiative of Promise Neighborhoods includes growing vegetables on 1/8-acre at The Seed Farm. The Promise Land Community Garden is coordinated in partnership with the Martin Luther & Coretta Scott-King Memorial Project of the Lehigh Valley and the Resurrected Community Development Corporation. Each organization supplies the person-power and The Seed Farm supplies the land, access to equipment and irrigation and training.

Youth and young adults ages 13-25 make up the core group of volunteers. However, all ages are welcomed, and children often work alongside elders in the garden. The volunteers learn to make purposeful decisions in their lives and in their community through engagement and physically working on the land. The results are immediate and real. All produce grown is brought to Promise Neighborhoods’ communities to be shared and distributed to residents.

The Promise Land Community Garden brings new vitality to the 42-acres at The Seed Farm. Garden volunteer days have become a place of community, with sharing of meals, dancing, and making music.

Dr. Hasshan Batts, Promise Neighborhoods’ Executive Director, says,

“When you share the keys, and give access to people who don’t normally have power, you get different outcomes. This is about food and food apartheid, but this garden is also about life.”

The garden’s first year has been a great success, and we look forward to growing this partnership in seasons to come!
ENSURING FOOD ACCESS IN CARBON AND MONROE COUNTIES

WEST END FOOD PANTRY

The Second Harvest network is vast, comprised of 200+ nonprofit community partners, including food pantries, meal centers, shelters, schools, and senior living centers.

Located in the Eldred Township Community Center in Kunkletown, the West End Food Pantry serves parts of Carbon and Monroe counties. West End Food Pantry, an entirely volunteer-run organization, opened its doors in November 2015. During its first days, West End served about 40 families. The pantry and its reach have grown tremendously. Now serving 500 families each month, it is a staple of the community.

President and Director, Karena Thek, who volunteers to lead the pantry in addition to her full-time job at a biotech company, has been directing West End since its opening day. She describes the participants she serves as seniors living on a fixed income, families struggling due to job loss or a death, single parents, and multi-generational households.

For many local families, West End is their most consistent source of nourishment. Karena says, “We do not want anyone to worry about where their next meal will come from. We are here to help.”

During the COVID-19 crisis, the food pantry’s operations underwent a major shift. Karena says, “We moved from stocking shelves to pre-bagging all products. We saw about 40 new families for each distribution. We heard stories from folks that never thought they would need help providing food for their children. We saw a lot of fear and a lot of uncertainty, but participants noted they were grateful for this tiny bit of interaction during the worst isolation many had ever encountered.”

Program Highlights

During 2020-21 Program Year

We distributed nearly

10 million
pounds of food

INCLUDING

3.4 million
pounds of fresh produce, perishable protein, and fresh dairy products (35% of our total distribution)

1.5 million
pounds of rescued food that would have otherwise end up in a landfill (16% of our total distribution)

23,873 boxes
of nutritious food to low-income seniors through the PA Senior Food Box Program

Expanded MilitaryShare
from 1 to 5 counties, now serving 140 military families facing food insecurity per month

Increased The Seed Farm’s Farm Business Incubator footprint
From 1 to 5.5 acres, a 450% increase in land utilization thanks to our 4 beginning farmers

Launched FreshForward
our mobile pantry program that increases distribution of fresh, nutritious food to the community
In the summer of 2020, Michelle Wagner started as a volunteer for The Seed Farm’s Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Workshare Program. For four months, she learned the basics of farming while helping harvest and prepare produce bags for the CSA recipients. During this time, she also learned about The Seed Farm’s Farm Incubator program.

This year, Michelle is one of four incubator farmers operating on The Seed Farm. She grows vegetables and flowers on a fourth of an acre. Originally being exposed to farming and CSA programs through a previous job, Michelle learned a lot about agriculture and got to see how the CSA process worked through an employee wellness program. She became interested in sustainability and learning how to grow her own food. “I started gardening, however I really wanted to take it to the next level. Learning how to homestead and start a small business, that was really appealing to me,” says Michelle.

The Seed Farm’s Planning Sessions helped Michelle launch Rise & Root Farm. “The Zoom classes were super educational and very helpful. I don’t think I would have been able to do this from scratch, on my own, without the resources from The Seed Farm,” says Michelle. “I love that they’re affiliated with Second Harvest Food Bank and Community Action Lehigh Valley. The whole organization is doing incredible and necessary work in our community.”
For every $1 donated, we can provide 6 meals to our neighbors in need.

LEARN MORE or DONATE ONLINE at SHFBLV.ORG

HUNGER ACTION MONTH | SEPTEMBER

Asking for help isn’t easy but helping can be! Whether you donate, volunteer, or help spread the word about Second Harvest, we’re calling on you to help end food insecurity. Contact Maison Allen, Volunteer Coordinator, at 484-241-1994 or mallen@caclv.org to get involved today.

EMPTY BOWLS | OCTOBER 21

We are playing it safe and won’t be hosting an in-person event this year, but we hope you’ll join us for our virtual program on October 21 from 12-1 PM. At our Virtual Empty Bowls, you will get a first-hand look at what’s new and exciting at Second Harvest. We will have fun and meaningful games and entertainment, and opportunities for everyone to interact together!

GIVING TUESDAY | NOVEMBER 30

Giving Tuesday is a global generosity movement. Thanks to One Putt Ventures, Mike Gausling, Founder, all donations made on Giving Tuesday will be matched up to $10,000. We hope you’ll consider supporting Second Harvest’s bold goal of $50,000 this year!